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ABSTRACT

This study investigated whether and to what degree management majors at one small, liberal arts institution actually "used" course knowledge on their job. Phase 1 surveyed all management majors graduating from the institution between 1988-1992, asking graduates to estimate the percentage of useful knowledge gained from each component of their undergraduate curriculum. Of the 94 completed surveys returned, 62 were from individuals who had not gone on to graduate study. An analysis of variance identified 13 graduates with very "high" levels of knowledge utilization. Phase 2 consisted of in-depth interviews with 12 of these graduates. Findings revealed that interviewees felt that: (1) competencies essential for performing successfully as a manager are the ability to write, speak and work well in a group and to understand one's own uniqueness; (2) general education courses contributed the knowledge utilized in these competencies; (3) little of course content presented by faculty resided "top of mind"; (4) a "feeling of knowing" comprised an important element in grounded theory; (5) theoretical course knowledge was perceived as such; and (6) teachers and teaching were at the center of all truly meaningful classroom experiences. (Contains nine references.) (Author/CK)

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PROBING THE CORE: WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS MOST USEFUL TO MANAGEMENT MAJORS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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HE

PROBING THE CORE: WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS MOST USEFUL TO MANAGEMENT MAJORS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Here is a question that might be familiar to every business faculty member. After having completed a course or having visited with recent graduates, the faculty member wonders: "Was any of the material that I taught actually 'used' by my students on their job?" The focus of this presentation is to preliminarily answer that question. This is an important. It follows, in part, from the assumption that all business subjects are applied subjects: that there is a connection between what is taught in the classroom and what is to be used at work. Furthermore, answers to this question must precede answers to the question "Are students learning what they need to know"? Faculty and administrators first need to find out what knowledge students actually use on their jobs before they, the faculty, can make curricular and course revisions to get at what students need to know.

Formally stated, the research question being investigated was: Whether and to what degree did management majors at one liberal arts institution actually 'use' course knowledge on their job. This research was conducted on a five-year cohort of undergraduate management majors (n=245) at a small, church-affiliated institution (total enrollment = 2300) in the southwestern suburbs of Chicago. The research was conducted in two phases.

Phase one involved sending a 13-page survey to all management majors who graduated from the institution between 1988-1992. The survey asked graduates to estimate the percentage of useful knowledge gained from each component of their undergraduate curriculum: their general education courses, their foundation business courses (marketing, accounting, finance, etc.), courses in the management major itself (organizational behavior, human resources management, strategic management, etc.) and electives.

Ninety-four completed surveys were returned (38% response rate). Of those 94, 61 surveys fell into the population of interest: those individuals who had not gone on for graduate study. In essence, then, the population being studied were graduates with only their baccalaureate degree. These 61 surveys were statistically analyzed. Using a one-way analysis of variance, 13 graduates reported very "high" levels of knowledge utilization ($p < .0000$). These 13 graduates, in turn, became the subjects of the research's second phase.

Phase two consisted of in-depth interviews with 12 of them. Major findings from the in-depth interviews were as follows:

(1) Four core competencies were perceived to be essential for successfully carrying out the functions of a manager. These four were the ability to write well, to speak well, to work well (collaboratively) in a group and to understand how one is different from others. These four components are crucial to the proposed grounded theory of knowledge utilization (see Figure 1).

(2) Of the two distinct curricular domains that comprise the curriculum (general education versus the major), it was generally the general education courses -- and not the business courses -- that were said to contribute knowledge utilized in the four business competencies.

(3) Relative to the total amount of time all faculty spent lecturing on, discussing, reviewing and testing "objective" course content, little of that course content resided "top of mind."

(4) Mediating whatever knowledge these individuals gained in the classroom was something called "a feeling of knowing." A feeling of knowing was the reported and pervasive sense that an individual's learning at such a "deep" level that they were unable to express it in words. Individuals were confident that they had learned things. They just couldn't specifically put what they learned into words. This feeling of knowing became an important element in the grounded theory (see Figure 1).

(5) Theoretical course knowledge was perceived as being just that: theoretical. These 12 individuals always wanted theory-based knowledge to be applied in some way. They always wanted to see how the theory "worked" in the real world.

(6) Teachers and teaching were at the center of all truly meaningful classroom learning experiences. Good teachers made the linkages clear between theory and practice. Good teachers gave these individuals confidence in themselves and their ability to do things. Good teachers had a genuine interest in and dedication to their students. In essence, good teachers made the difference between whether the student truly got excited and passionate about the subject or whether the student merely got by.

Qualitative research often attempts to explore the "lived experience" of subjects. And so it will be with this presentation. Extensive, verbatim quotation from the in-depth interviews will be a central feature of the presentation. Having these 12 individuals speak directly to us, as faculty and administrators, about how useful their undergraduate management education was in preparing them for their jobs is of value. The research findings suggest there is a gap between what faculty think will be useful and what students actually find useful on their jobs.

Within the past ten years, schools and colleges of business have come under attack from various constituencies (Berhman and Levin, 1985; Cheit, 1985; Hayes and Abernathy, 1980; Levitt, 1989; Muller, Porter, and Rehder, 1988; Porter and McKibbin, 1988). Most vocal, though, have been employers. Employers have said that, by and large, schools and colleges of business do not teach students the skills that are most needed by contemporary business. These challenges to business education have been broad based and pertain to both undergraduate as well as graduate business education. Faculty response will vary, but, inevitably, all faculty must, sooner or later, consider some form of the question: Are students learning what they need to learn? Clearly, business has provided its own answer to that question: A resounding "No!" Embedded within the question of whether students are learning what they need to learn, though, is another question. And that is: To what degree do students actually 'use' on their jobs the course knowledge that we, as faculty, have tried to teach them? The research reported below attempts to explore that question.

Institutional Profile

This research was conducted at a small, church-affiliated institution in the suburbs of Chicago. The institution has a college of business, a college of arts and sciences and a college of nursing. Graduate programs are offered in each college. Total undergraduate enrollment is 2,000, with 350 students enrolled in the business college. Undergraduate business students have a fairly typical choice of majors, including management, marketing, finance, economics and MIS. The management major has the largest number of business majors, approximately 175. Overall, the institution says that its student body is predominated by first-generation college

students. The Carnegie classification for this institution is Comprehensive College I (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987).

Research Methodology

This research was conducted in two phases. Phase one involved sending a 13-page survey to all management majors who graduated from the institution between 1988-1992 (n=245). The survey was designed to explore perceived amounts of knowledge utilization within this cohort of graduated management majors. The survey asked these graduates to distinguish between three aspects of knowledge utilization: usable knowledge, useful knowledge and effective knowledge. This three part division follows Ralph Kilmann and his colleague's conceptual framework for knowledge utilization (Kilmann, Slevin and Thomas, 1983). According to Kilmann et al., usable knowledge is knowledge that is theoretically valuable to the student and is thus remembered, but which has not yet been applied on the job. Useful knowledge, in contrast, has been applied on the job, and effective knowledge is simply the student's assessment of whether and to what degree the knowledge used was effective. Graduates were asked to estimate the percentage of usable, useful and effective knowledge they had gained from each component of their undergraduate education: (1) their general education courses; (2) their foundation business courses (marketing, accounting, finance, etc.); (3) courses in the management major itself (organizational behavior, human resources management, strategic management, etc.); and (4) electives. Thus, 12 separate estimates of knowledge utilization were captured in the phase one survey (four curricular domain times the three components of knowledge utilization.)

Ninety-four completed surveys were returned (38% response rate). Of those 94, 61 surveys fell into the population of interest: those individuals who had not gone on for graduate study. In essence, then, the population being studied were graduates with only their baccalaureate degree. These 61 surveys were statistically analyzed. Using a one-way analysis of variance, 13 graduates reported very "high" levels of usable knowledge utilization from their general education courses ($p < .0000$). This was the only scale that divided the respondents into statistically meaningfully groups. For a more detailed discussion of the data analysis, see Rosenbloom (1995).

These 13 graduates, in turn, became the subjects of the research's second phase. Phase two consisted of in-depth interviews with 12 graduates. Every interview consisted of a detailed review of that individual's undergraduate course choices. For every course taken, the individual was asked to evaluate whether that specific course gave him or her usable, useful or effective knowledge. Every individual was encouraged to go beyond a simple "yes" or "no" and was encourage to explain why each course either gave or failed to give usable, useful or effective knowledge. These detailed responses became the data from which the following findings emerged.

The Four Basic Business Competencies

All knowledge was not equal in the minds of these interviewees. And certainly every course did not contribute equally to knowledge utilization. Taken en masse, though, these interviews strongly indicated that four domains of knowledge were repeatedly thought to be essential for business success. And any course that contributed to one of these four domains was said to be high in utilized knowledge. The four domains were: speaking, writing,

self-reflective thinking and getting along with people in a group. These four areas were selected because the individuals interviewed here saw them as the fundamental building blocks (core components) for success at work.

One African-American interviewee, John, captured the very essence of how individuals commonly evaluated these four fundamental domains. He said,

> I use Intro to Human Communications every day. Not one specific thing. Not, how you get up in front of the class and talk. I haven't used that yet. But as far as how to communicate with people, and how not to look at everybody as the same, that people are different...to forget the differences and to get your point across -- I do that every day.
>
> College Writing: I use it enough. I haven't had to do a big research project. I haven't done that yet; but I know I can do it if I had to. Like, it's there.
>
> And Cultural Diversity [a required sociology class] it's every day. I think I can deal with prejudice; that comes to mind. I now understand different cultures. But you know, there's only one race: it's the human race. I just deal with it. Things aren't just black and white. It's not an all white world, and it never will be. The world's not all white. It's just one big soup bowl.

And when asked to explain further why he thought those three courses were the most useful, John said,

> Well, my thing is, that I'm the kind of person that likes to do a lot of creative things. And in these classes that I pointed out, we did a lot of getting together in groups, discussing a lot of things. Going back to your room, discussing this, discussing that. It kinda made for an interesting conversation, even if there were different cultures in the room. That kinda helped with cultural diversity: You had to communicate. You had to write your stuff down in a way that everyone can understand it. I mean...I guess it all tied in, especially these three courses.

What John's interview made clear was the interconnectedness and interrelationship between these four core aspects of knowledge utilization. The embedded logic that stands behind this exemplary quotation (and behind all the other interview quotations as well) runs something like this. The ability to speak and communicate well is essential to work. Effective, clear writing is also essential to work. Writing and speaking ultimately have some audience and

understanding who that audience is important to work too. But, as John noted, people at work often tend to be different from oneself. Thus being able to understand individual differences is crucial for having a good personal, one-on-one relationship with individuals at work; understanding differences is also essential for working effectively with and in groups or teams. Ultimately, then, what matters most at work is working and interacting effectively with people, and any course that builds competence and confidence in the student-learner to achieve that goal is said to be high on utilized knowledge.

John confirmed this embedded logic, when he cycled back to some of his earlier comments at his interview's end. He said,

> Whether it be communication, philosophy, cultural diversity, or principles of management, you're going to be working with people. Communication. You're going to have to talk differently to management. You might even have to get up and give a presentation. Well, even in your class, we had to get up and speak. And I guess the different type of activities you do in class really matters too. If you get up and talk, you get up in front of the class. You've got to get up in front of the class and give your presentation. Fact being, you never know. You never know when it might be in your job one day: You've got to get up and give a presentation to the president of your company. [If you've had these classes], it's not going to be that bad. You've got to be prepared. Be prepared. That's half the battle: just being prepared.

Another interviewee, Ron, echoed all of the key points made above: knowing how to write is important; being able to speak in front of a group is important; getting along with others who are different from oneself is important; and, finally, developing one's thinking skills is important. Here's Ron on the centrality of good writing:

> I think you've got to have good writing skills in the business environment. You can't just get by with sloppy handwriting, or with incomplete sentences. I mean, people are going to read this, so it kinda shows if you're professional or if you're not! (chuckles) So I've seen some things from different bosses who really couldn't write, and it kinda showed me that, maybe, they weren't as educated as I thought. And some of the other things I learned from college writing [were] how to write basically a sentence, a complete sentence, with correct commas, periods and capital letters.
>
> Other things that I took away from [my Introduction to Human Communications course] were basically how to think. If you're readin' something, how to actually

> draw that knowledge from the reading and put it on the paper. Sometimes we had to summarize a story, and I think that was very useful because you have to do that in your own mind if someone's talkin' to ya. You have to summarize what they're saying, and put it down on paper sometimes. And I found that very useful.

What becomes clear from both John's and Ron's interviews is that writing is one of the four essential business skills. On the one hand, good writing was a sign of being a "professional." On the other, it distinguished the educated from the uneducated manager. Furthermore, good writing involved reflective, analytic thinking -- another essential business skill. Thus, to summarize a story involved the same mental discipline and skills as summarizing what someone verbally said. Speaking well is another of the four basic skills needed for business, as the following quotation from Ron demonstrates:

> My speech class, I thought that was very useful, too. I mean I try and remember the things I learned in that class. Like you have to pronounce your words correctly, be fluent and try not to be nervous. Lots of times I'll go into a body shop and I got all these mechanics standing there, smoking and they're all watching me. So I kinda have to do the same thing I did in [my speech] class: I kinda look at the tops of their heads. They're all listening to what I have to say, and I'll be talkin'to the secretary, or maybe I'll be talkin' to a whole group while I'm in the body shop. I'll say, "Hey, these are our rates. If you get anybody in, refer them to Premier Car Rental. You know, we have the cheapest cars, and we provide excellent service to our customers." You know...da, da, da, da. So, maybe, I'll be sayin' this and at the same time lookin' at a whole group of people. [From that speech class] I remember how to look around. Maybe make some eye contact, here or there. (Unless somebody's tryin' to make me laugh). (chuckles) Which is okay, you know when you're in there. It's okay to make mistakes. You can always bounce back.

So for Ron, the overriding benefit of his speech class was its direct connection with work. And the skills that he learned and practiced in class (making eye contact, controlling his nervousness) were transformed from something that was merely "nice to know" into highly useful knowledge the moment he entered the body shop and began talking. One should note, too, that Ron's "pitch" was always made in relation to someone else (either the secretary or a

group of watchful mechanics). In stating this, Ron alludes to another of the four essential business skills: getting along with people. Utilized knowledge is instrumental knowledge.

An intriguing finding from this research had to with the relationship of knowledge utilization to specific classes. So far, the quotations have illustrated a rather mundane aspect of this relationship. It's expected that a speech course would build confidence in the student-learner's ability to deliver speeches. A writing course should, likewise, build competence in one's ability to write. But as noted earlier, any course (the interesting finding) had the potential to contribute to the four essential business skills. And in the following quotation, it was an international business course that gave one individual, Frank, confidence in speaking! Frank said, "There was a lot of getting up in front of people and expressing how you feel on a certain theory, or what you wrote as your answer, or what your essay was. That helps you become more relaxed in front of people."

Later in his interview, Frank reinforced just how important good communication and effective speaking skills were when he discussed his small business class.

> [In the small business class,] you had to open your own business and you had to get up in front of people [in class] and tell them why, or what you were doing, or what's left. And even if you had a stupid answer, you had to keep a straight face and try and be real business-like in front of everybody. In other words, you didn't want to look like an ass. And that would be the same thing as if you worked for somebody and you screwed up something, or you realized that [people at work] weren't picking up on something you told them, or that they didn't seem to care. You still have to stand up there and get through it.

Frank learned that although there may be times at work that one feels embarrassed or that one is confronted with things, the manager, the boss or the responsible team member, still needs to get the work done.

In like vein, a theater course can have aspects that are directly transferable to work. Here's Ron again on his theater course:

> The thing is: in theater you're kinda on stage and it's the same when you're in sales. When you go into business environment you've got to look your best. You've got to do a little bit of an acting job: smile, be yourself. But you've got to act a little bit. And I try to do that especially when I'm in a body shop and it's my first time goin' in. I'm kinda nervous. I'll put on a big smile. I have a nice tie. I'll go and try to meet the secretary and try to talk to her. I try to convince her that if she has a referral to give it to Premier [my company] instead of Enterprise or an agency. Yeah. So I mean, you're on stage. It's like the stoplight is on you when you're in there, and you have to perform while you're there. I thought [my theater class] was kind of a good class to have.

Lastly, I would like to describe and then illustrate what I mean by "self-reflective thinking" as one of the four essential business skills. Self-reflective thinking is best described as the student-learner's understanding of the world as a set of differences. People are different: values are different; cultures are different; religions are different; languages are different. Furthermore, the student-learner comes to understand that there are, in fact, many different and valid ways to solve "objective" problems. In essence, the student learns, when he or she engages in self-reflective thinking, that his or her view in not the only view, but is just one view. The reason I term this "self-reflective" is that the learner raises this understanding to a level of consciousness that enables her or him to thoughtfully, analytically see and judge himself or herself in relation to others. There is a reflexive quality here. The individual attempts to understand herself or himself as a part of the group as well as apart from the group. John's earlier statements about his understanding of the differences in people captured his self-reflective thinking.

Dave, a double major in accounting and management, in particular, provided several examples of self-reflective thinking. Early on in his interview, he said this about his philosophy teacher, whom he admired greatly,

> She basically forced you into thinking about things. Okay, it's not black and white. What will come from your decisions? Why am I making this decision?...[In other words] she would force you not only to think one sided, but to see the other side. Compare. And that really confused a lot of people [in class]. A lot of people [in class]

were brought up in the Midwest [and were taught]: All Blacks are bad...and this and that. And [the teacher] forced you to see everything. Both sides. Sometimes it even confused me.

And almost immediately came this work-related application:

> Well, in going through and making a business decision, you can't just react right away. You have to think about it and make sure it's financially [sound] and how everything else is going to fall into the same whole. [You need to ask yourself] is it a good decision for us? I mean, financially it might be. But what about people-wise? What is the reason why we're doing this? [Philosophy] just made me think about things more.

The same theme of self-reflective thinking reappeared when Dave evaluated his Introduction to Strategic Management course, which was the capstone course in the management major. The essence of that course was

> finding out that there's more than one answer to certain situations. [The teacher] was great. He forced people (maybe forced is a bad word), he helped students reach into themselves and do things. He made you look into things and to see that there isn't necessarily a right way, but many different ways [to do things]. And then [you had to] choose out of that what is the best [for that] situation.

And finally Dave came back to this same theme at the end of his interview. When asked to summarize his perception of the value of general education courses, he said, "[They, the gen eds,] forced me to think different ways and to look at a situation and to know that there's not only one answer. There could be two answers." This was a profound change in Dave's thinking, as he immediately went on to explain. "Well, I was brought up that there was one way and only one way...you know, my way. And some of things [I learned] was to say, 'Okay, this the way I want to do it; I want it done [this way].' But I learned to see other ways that it can be done." And to illustrate just how important being able to think self-reflexively was, Dave again made this connection with work:

> Let me give you an illustration accounting-wise. The way I close the books this month and the way somebody else does are two different ways. I may take more shortcuts than somebody else. Or, I many accrue for something differently than somebody else does. But the net effect at the end is the same thing. Like my boss says, "Ehh, a million this way, a million that way. It all equals out!" (chuckles)

Self-reflective thinking for Dave implied that there is not one set way to do things, even in accounting. And as always, self-reflective thinking related to work and thus was an element in knowledge utilization.

Remembering What One Learns and A Feeling of Knowing

Directly related to student learning was one very sobering -- and startling -- finding. It was that at for all the time and energy devoted to having undergraduates remember the "facts" of a particular course, that is, its content, very few of those "facts" and very little of the course's specific content remained "top-of-mind" after graduation. Said differently, relative to the total amount of classroom time faculty spend lecturing, reviewing, questioning, drilling and testing undergraduates on course content (facts, dates, names, terms, definitions, book contents, event sequences, and the like) -- this writer included -- little of that content was remembered during these interviews.

But what was truly fascinating about these 12 interviews was that although remembered knowledge was low, the sense of having knowledge was high. And by the phrase, "having knowledge," I mean an often inarticulate but very real sense on the part of all 12 interviewees that valuable knowledge was gained from a course, even if it couldn't be expressed or put into words during the interview. Psychologists who study metacognition have, since 1965, called this state, a "feeling of knowing." "The classic definition of feeling of knowing is that it is the state of believing that a piece of information can be retrieved from memory even though the information currently cannot be recalled" (Miner and Reder, 1994, p. 47). And it is exactly this experience, of a strong feeling of knowing, that the 12 individuals interviewed here described time and time again. In short, then, these 12 individuals articulated a very small

amount of remembered course knowledge (course facts, dates, theories, authors, etc.) but expressed a very strong feeling of having knowledge from specific courses.

So, a representative interview might be Michelle's. One sequence in her interview went as follows:

> Researcher: Let's move on to Western Civ.
> Michelle: Oh, gosh.
> Researcher: Do you remember anything?
> Michelle: Not a thing.
> Researcher: Zip.
> Michelle: Zip-o-la.
> Researcher: How about your Intro to Human Communications class.
> Michelle: I'm not sure that I had to take that. Did I take that?
> Researcher: You had to have taken something like that. Perhaps speech course or some equivalent, as part of your gen ed requirements.
> Michelle: You know, I did take a speech course at [a local community college], but I don't remember much.
> Researcher: Do you remember anything?
> Michelle: No.
> Researcher: How about your Philosophy course?
> Michelle: Yes! I took that at the community college.

However, Michelle captured the essence of a feeling of knowing when she said this, later in the interview: "I really enjoyed all the classes I took at [the community college]. As far remembering them all, I don't. But if I was to see the book or whatever, I'm sure it would come back to me. I'm sure I use a lot of that stuff, but I'm not conscious of it." The confidence that Michelle evinced that she had gained valuable, "useful" knowledge from some of her community college courses, even though in that very moment of the interview, she couldn't remember or cite specifics, is the very essence of the feeling of knowing. Michelle again stated her feeling of knowing later in the interview when she said, "I can't remember everything from that class. I know I used a lot of things that I learned in management class on my job. But as far as pinpointing everything the teacher said, I can't." And at the end of her interview, Michelle

returned again to the feeling of knowing theme, "You know, I know that I use everything [from my management courses] subconsciously...I know I use them, but I can't pinpoint anything."

Like Michelle's interview, Joe's interview similarly captured his own, strong feeling of knowing. For Joe, the feeling of knowing was a deeply rooted phenomenon. He knew, somewhere in the back of his mind, that he had learned a variety of things through various courses, but his ability to call them forth during the interview was nil. He said, "I mean, even if I don't recall learning it, I'm sure I did -- somewhere. And back in my mind, I'm probably going to draw upon different ideas and probably think that they're mine. Like I'm some great genius! (chuckles) But I know that I learned them in school, and it's probably basic to a lot of people." Later in the interview, he returned to this same point, when asked for his opinions on his human resources course: "Like I say, I'm going to think of some great idea one day and, you know, just use different techniques that I learned in this class. You can't say specifically it's the X, Y or Z technique. You just use it."

The Importance of Good Teaching

Finally, I'd like to turn to the role of the teacher in both forming and forging the links between knowledge that is superfulous and knowledge that is both usable and/or useful. For these 12 individuals, it was abundantly clear what made a good teacher and what made a poor one. Adrienne, a returning adult student, made the distinctions evident:

> You can sense [as the student] if the teacher gets up there and lectures, straight lecture or reads from the book and doesn't give you the opportunity to ask questions; that you really don't know where you're at; or doesn't bring anything to the class to enhance the excitement or the education. You [the student] just end up saying to yourself, "I can't go to this class again. It's terrible." [On the other hand,] if the teacher turns around and makes the class interesting by asking, Are there any questions? Are you understanding what I'm saying? Or, Here's an example of this. And he brings in examples ...then you want to go to that class. (Adrienne contrasting two different business teachers)

As Adrienne's quotation makes abundantly clear, students are minutely sensitive to good and bad teaching. And why not? After 16 years of formal education, students are savvy consumers when it comes to teachers and teaching. They know what, for them, makes for good and bad teaching. Sometimes they need prompting to articulate those qualities, but they always know them.

Adrienne's quotation is exemplary for it succinctly captures many of the hallmarks of both good and bad teaching. The good teacher makes class interesting, engages students by asking questions and brings in outside examples to class. The process seems to be very much like a two way conversation between student and teacher. Sometimes the teacher talks the most; other times, the students. But it's always a back and forth. The bad teacher, in contrast, is boring, reads only from the book, focuses mainly on him/herself and doesn't involve the student in any meaningful way in the class. The process here is strictly one way: teacher to student, in which the student is the passive recipient of the teacher's "knowledge." The essence, then, of Adrienne's statement is this: Teachers are like magnets. The good teacher draws students into the class and engages them. The bad teacher repels students from the class and loses them.

If one theme was most repeated about good teaching during the interviews, it was that the good teacher captured the student's interest. Making the class "interesting" (as Adrienne noted above) is central to an effective classroom learning experience. Chris, a male student, said this about his College Writing instructor: "When I took that course, I really, really enjoyed it and I did well in it. And probably one of the reasons is that I had a good instructor." And finally, Ron captured the essence of the engaged, energetic teaching experience when he gave this detailed description of his natural science teacher:

> He was very interesting. He was into his work and he enjoyed what he was doing. And I could get that from him. He really enjoyed it, and he made us enjoy it too. [Natural science] was so interesting. He was so enthusiastic about it. He would come in and you just knew that he really liked what he was doing. And that is very easy [for students] to see in a teacher....If the teacher likes what he's doing, I think it gets conveyed to the students, that they're going to like it too.

Conclusion

In answer, then, to the question what knowledge is most useful to management majors, the following things can be asserted based on these 12 in-depth interviews:

(1) Four core competencies were perceived to be essential for successfully carrying out the functions of a manager. These four were the ability to write well, to speak well, to work well (collaboratively) in a group and to understand how one is different from others.

(2) Any course in the curriculum has the potential to support these four competencies. However, based on these interviews, it was generally the general education courses -- and not the business courses -- that were said to contribute knowledge utilized in the four business competencies.

(3) Relative to the total amount of time all faculty spent lecturing on, discussing, reviewing and testing "objective" course content, little of that course content resided "top of mind."

(4) Mediating whatever knowledge these individuals gained in the classroom was something called "a feeling of knowing." A feeling of knowing was the reported and pervasive sense that an individual's learning at such a "deep" level that they were unable to express it in words. Individuals were confident that they had learned things. They just couldn't specifically put what they learned into words.

(5) Teachers and teaching were at the center of all truly meaningful classroom learning experiences. Good teachers made the linkages clear between theory and practice. Good teachers gave these individuals confidence in themselves and their ability to do things. Good teachers had a genuine interest in and dedication to their students. In essence, good teachers made the difference between whether the student truly got excited and passionate about the subject or whether the student merely got by.

Qualitative research often attempts to explore the "lived experience" of subjects. And so it was with this research. Having listened to a few of the voices of a few management majors, these individuals present some interesting challenges to us as management faculty:

(1) How can we make every course support and then expand the four basic core competencies the management graduates have said were the most valuable to them on their job?

(2) Are these, in fact, " the core" competencies? What other business skills and competencies would we like management majors to have? And how can be design courses within an integrated curriculum that ensures that they obtain those skills?

(3) How can we work with our colleagues in the liberal arts to support their work, since the fundamental learnings in the general education courses seemed to have more relevance to these individuals than "our" course?

(4) How can we challenge ourselves to be the best teachers that we can be -- for clearly these individuals are minutely sensitive to both teaching style and teaching content.

In the end, these research findings suggest there is a gap between what faculty think will be useful and what students actually find useful on their jobs. There is work to be done.

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